THE QUEST

In *Roderick Hudson* Henry James focuses the idea of refinement on the achievement of an integral self, which is necessarily a straining after an integration of the mind and the spirit. How the mind and the spirit can achieve a high degree of ultimate refinement in their own particular spheres, and yet prove unredemptive as far as the whole personality is concerned, is fully illustrated in the contrastive destinies of Roderick and Rowland. Roderick has conscience, Rowland, consciousness; conscience offers depth, but not facility which must come through a widening of consciousness. Rowland has consciousness, but lacks conscience which alone must enable him to view life steadily and wholly. Roderick and Rowland must be at once each himself and also the other, for only then the complete artist would emerge.

Leon Edel remarks:

> it is as if Henry James had carefully divided his artist self into the two characters: Rowland is the restrained, suppressed American in James, all decorous caution and New England conscience. He has taste, appreciation, and the artistic temperament - but he is not an artist. Roderick is the artist side of James all flame and passion, yet rendered ineffectual by the very fear of his own intensities. Roderick seems to represent all that Henry James was within, but could not allow himself to be or do.[1]

Like Roderick, Henry James takes a plunge into the very depths of life with the Rowland in him mounting guard over his behaviour and holding it by a leash. With his intellectual refinement he would learn the art of being involved and uninvolved at one and the same time. America was hardly the right place for the artist; James felt that as an artist his development, although radically American, lay organically in Europe. He must have felt a pang at leaving "an American day, an American landscape, an American atmosphere" which he loved

rfearfy. Rowland wistfully remarks, "I shall accuse myself of having slighted them."* Viewed as an American novel, *Roderick Hudson* is the story of an innocent American brought up in moral abstractions in quest of experience in the Europe of antiquity, of art and culture, of traditions and manners. The American comes to grief, James seems to say, not because Europe is wicked, but because his own conscious-Re ss and sensibility are unrefined and undeveloped through the inhibition of a conscience which is too timorous to launch out the self ' on the tides, of cultural intensity, A consciousness which lacks refine*